

COVID-19 GUIDANCE

MAGISTRATES' COURTS: CONTEST HEARINGS

5 October 2021

THIS GUIDANCE WILL COME INTO EFFECT ON 11 OCTOBER 2021

1. The Contest Listing Form 2021 ("the Form") will be used when listing contests in criminal cases in the Magistrates' Court and will replace the HR2 Form.
2. The Contest Listing Form is designed to assist the judge in identifying the witness requirements for the case and to alert the NICTS to the expected number of persons attending court. It is imperative that the court is informed, prior to a date being allocated for contest, of the number of witnesses participating in a contest and whether any of those witnesses are children or require any special measures. Court managers need to make appropriate arrangements to manage footfall in courtrooms and public areas of the court building and ensure that the overall numbers attending do not exceed the published Covid-19 guidance and the risk assessments carried out by NICTS for court buildings.
3. It is the responsibility of the defence and prosecution representatives to work collaboratively to complete the Form.
4. The following procedure is to be followed in all cases:
 - (1) On a plea of not guilty, the case will be adjourned for two weeks to allow the PPS to obtain witness availability.
 - (2) Within two working days of a plea of not guilty, the defence representative will complete the Form, identifying the names of the required prosecution and defence witnesses and indicating a view on whether the witnesses should attend in person or remotely.
 - (3) The Form should be emailed to the PPS via the relevant addresses with "Contest Listing Form" in the title of the email:

Belfast Chambers: B&ECourtSupport@ppsni.gov.uk

Foyle Chambers: CourtSupportFoyle@ppsni.gov.uk

Omagh Chambers: OmaghCourtSupport@ppsni.gov.uk

Newry Chambers: PPSNewryCourtSupport@ppsni.gov.uk

- (4) The PPS will lodge the completed Form with the relevant court office three working days before the next listing of the case. It will only be necessary for the availability of witnesses to be identified on the Form in those cases prosecuted in Belfast that require the involvement of 4 witnesses (including defence witnesses) or more or in cases where the contest cannot be accommodated in a normal sitting. For cases listed in Laganside Courts, the form should be emailed to BelfastCase.Progression@courtsni.gov.uk. For all other Magistrates' Courts the Form should be emailed to the court office (email addresses for court offices can be found [here](#)).